

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Faculty Publications, Department of History

History, Department of

3-2017

New Directions in Indigenous Women's History

Susana D. Geliga

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, sgeliga@yahoo.com

Margaret D. Jacobs

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, mjacobs3@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historyfacpub>



Part of the [History Commons](#), [Indigenous Studies Commons](#), [Other American Studies Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Geliga, Susana D. and Jacobs, Margaret D., "New Directions in Indigenous Women's History" (2017). *Faculty Publications, Department of History*. 199.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historyfacpub/199>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the History, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications, Department of History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Published in *Gender & History*, Vol. 29 No.1 (April 2017), pp 198–210.
Copyright © 2017 John Wiley & Sons Ltd. Used by permission.

REVIEW ESSAY

New Directions in Indigenous Women's History

Susana D. Geliga¹ and Margaret D. Jacobs²

¹ PhD student, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

² Professor of History, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Brenda Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), pp. 240. ISBN: 978-1-101-56025-9

Ann McGrath, *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), pp. 538. ISBN: 978-0-8032-3825-1

Andrae M. Marak and Laura Tuennerman, *At the Border of Empires: The Tohono O'odham, Gender, and Assimilation, 1880–1934* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), pp. 232. ISBN: 978-0-8165-2115-9

Mary Jane McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940–1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), pp. 336. ISBN: 978-0-88755-738-5

Sarah Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), pp. 232. ISBN 978-0-8166-9633-8

In 1942, in an effort to dispel common misrepresentations about Native American women, the Yankton Sioux anthropologist Ella Deloria began work on an ethnographic novel that narrated the story of three generations of Dakota women who lived on the Great Plains before the United States confined their tribes to reservations. Unfortunately, when Deloria finished the book in 1948, she could not find a publisher, and it was only eighteen years after her death that the University of Nebraska Press finally published *Waterlily* in 1988.¹

Deloria's experience with *Waterlily* conveys much about the study of Indigenous women's history: it transcends disciplines and genres and has innovated new methodologies; it has often been animated by a desire to counter stereotypes and myths about Native women; and it is a field that has struggled to gain visibility.² Nearly thirty years after the publication of *Waterlily*, Indigenous women are still largely absent from the narratives we historians tell about women, Indigenous peoples and our nations, especially in the United States. A recent forum on US women's history in the *Journal of American History* included Native American women in its discussion of intersectionality, but on the basis of race not on colonial status, a key analytical category for Native American women's history. The second part of the forum highlighted new research on the history of rights, social movements, empire and the modern state, including women's reproductive labor. Although histories of American Indian women are integrally bound up with all these topics, they did not garner a mention.³

It is tempting to attribute this lack of coverage of Indigenous women's history to the small numbers of Native Americans within American society. Yet in Canada and Australia, where Indigenous numbers are equally low, historians of Indigenous women have had great influence in recasting historical narratives.⁴ Why not so in the United States? Perhaps it is because the general trajectory of US women's history, for all its diversity and scholarly sophistication, still has traces of older narratives that foreground progress and liberation, which are belied by Native American women's history. Or maybe it is because historians of Indigenous women focus as much on tracking persistence and cultural continuity as on charting change over time, the historian's creed. Perhaps it is due to a premise of colonialism, according to the historian Ann McGrath, that Indigenous peoples existed outside modernity and "could have no history." Native women, she writes, have been particularly "expunged from history."⁵

The authors of five recent books in the field of Indigenous women's history wish to restore Indigenous women to history, as Ella Deloria did more than seventy years ago. The voices and experiences of Indigenous women are so often muted and marginalized in standard written historical sources, but now historians of Indigenous women are intent on providing a more complete presentation of Indigenous women as multidimensional, complex and active agents of history. Most are pivoting away from histories that emphasize how non-Indigenous people viewed and victimized Indigenous women toward histories that center Indigenous women within their own cultural contexts by designing and using new historical methodologies.⁶ Yet, as some of these new designs and methodologies collide with older approaches, conflicts of interpretation arise in the negotiation of this new space for Indigenous women in history. The inclusion of Indigenous voices in the interpretation of their histories however, not only aligns with an Indigenous perspective like that of Ella Deloria, but remains an underutilized resource to a more complete and fuller history.

Brenda Child, who was raised on the Red Lake reservation in Minnesota, offers one such woman-centered history in *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community* (Penguin, 2012).⁷ She combines Ojibwe narratives with archival resources, her own family history and oral histories, to create a fuller account of Indigenous women who persevered throughout various eras of state intervention and hardship. Her book, one of the only synthetic historical treatments of a group of Indigenous women over a long sweep of history, takes up many familiar themes: women's status over time; gendered divisions of labor; the fur trade and interracial marriage; boarding schools and other assimilation efforts; urbanization; and activism. Her work builds on earlier scholarship and also points in new directions.

Rather than relying on European-based sources (such as the observations of missionaries) to analyze Indigenous gender systems, Child uses Ojibwe terms and cultural concepts to demonstrate that Ojibwe women were community builders with significant responsibilities in the gendered economy. *Mindimooyenh*, the Ojibwe word that gives Child her title, means a female elder or "one who holds things together." This term expresses the exact opposite of the usual European cultural referent for Indigenous women – the squaw. By contrast it makes "reference to the economic competence and organizational

skill that Ojibwe women, especially grandmothers and those in their maturity, exercised within their families and communities.”⁸ Within Ojibwe cosmology, Child notes, women held a revered role, especially since the Ojibwe regarded the earth as female. Historian Theda Perdue has argued similarly that the Cherokees believed their ancestral mother Selu gave them corn, and therefore they valued women highly.⁹

Child also reconstructs the Ojibwe gendered division of labor. While Ojibwe men hunted and fished, women harvested wild rice for thousands of years in the Great Lakes region. Child writes that the harvest “was the most visible expression of women’s autonomy in Ojibwe society” and that “water was a gendered space where women held property rights.” Some Ojibwe women practiced agriculture, too.¹⁰ Child’s representation of the Ojibwe gendered economy and the power and autonomy the Ojibwe women enjoyed accords with other recent scholarship on American Indian women and complementary Indigenous gender systems, including Perdue’s book on Cherokee women prior to Indian removal.¹¹ Child and Perdue have noted, too, that outsiders often misinterpreted Indigenous gender systems, believing that Indian women were oppressed because they engaged in agricultural and other physical labor and that Indian men were lazy. Women’s role in agriculture often led European observers to discount its significance for Indian peoples, according to Perdue and Child.¹²

Child devotes considerable attention to the fur trade and interracial marriage between Ojibwe women and European men, another topic that has long interested historians of Indigenous women. Prior to 1980, fur-trade historians had typically considered intermarriages – if they considered them at all – as unions of convenience in which European men exploited Indian women and often abandoned them when they returned to European settlements. Sylvia Van Kirk’s *Many Tender Ties* from 1980 revolutionized how scholars understood Native women and these intermarriages. She and other scholars showed that Indian women became powerful intermediaries who were essential to the fur trade through their marriages to European men. Moreover many if not most of these marriages were not just economic arrangements but romantic attachments based on “many tender ties.”¹³ Lynette Russell has documented something similar for Aboriginal women and European men in the sealing industry in Australia.¹⁴ Like other scholars of interracial marriage in fur-trade society, Child characterizes these unions as mutually beneficial, and she notes that the women

continued to control the food supply, the ultimate source of survival. Child contends that the fur trade did not radically upset the Ojibwe gender balance. The gendered division of labor was “not so rigid that women could not take on a unique role in the community” and Ojibwe women who married traders simply “expanded the Ojibwe idea of what kinds of work a woman could do.”¹⁵ Religious conversion to Catholicism also often accompanied the fur trade. Unlike some early historians of Christian conversion and Indigenous women, Child does not regard it as an overly oppressive force, writing that it did not always have an “entirely hegemonic quality.”¹⁶

The question of Indigenous women’s status and whether or how it declined with new economic relations, Christian conversion and European colonization of Indian lands loomed large in early scholarship on Indigenous women. Much of this work charted a steady decline in Indian women’s status.¹⁷ Perdue’s book on Cherokee women in 1998 led to a reassessment. She rejected what she called “declension theory,” and emphasized instead cultural persistence even as dramatic upheavals rocked the Cherokee world.¹⁸

While attentive to heavy-handed efforts by the federal government that impinged on Indigenous women’s autonomy, Child also rejects a story of decline. She charts changes in Ojibwe women’s status and experience in the nineteenth century when the government confined the Ojibwe to reservations and then allotted their communally held land to individuals. Customarily Ojibwe “men did not gain the right to direct a woman’s life or resources after marriage,” but the US system of land allotment conceived of men as heads of household and made Ojibwe marriage more patriarchal.¹⁹ But, Child contends, Ojibwe women continued to “hold the world together” and maintain some measure of cultural continuity.

Child treats the Mount Pleasant boarding school that many Ojibwe children attended in a similar fashion. The Indian boarding schools sought to assimilate Indian children – especially through the imposition of American gender roles – from the late nineteenth century into at least the 1930s, and they also threatened Indigenous women’s status, as many scholars have documented.²⁰ However, Child focuses more on how indigent Indian parents used the schools as part of an economic strategy during the hard times of the Great Depression than on whether the schools diminished Ojibwe women’s standing within their communities.

Child presents a history that emphasizes adaptation, resilience and persistence. A significant new healing practice emerged among Ojibwe women, for example, during the global disaster of the Spanish influenza at the end of the First World War: the jingle dress dance. An Ojibwe man received a vision of the distinctive dress and dance to save his daughter from the deadly flu, but Ojibwe women became responsible for the dance's proliferation. The dance, carried out "to ensure the health and wellbeing of an individual, their family, or even the broader tribal community," became symbolic of "how Ojibwe women helped their communities mitigate the perilous effects of American colonialism and cope with reservation life."²¹ During the Depression, in another example of cultural adaptation, men took up wild rice harvesting after the federal government set up wild rice camps through the Civilian Conservation Corps' Indian Division. What had once been a female dominion became a gender-neutral activity.²² Other historians, including Marsha Weisiger, have also seen the Great Depression and the so-called Indian New Deal policy as inadvertently transformative of Indigenous gender roles.²³

Child documents Indigenous women's move to urban areas beginning in the 1920s, a newer line of inquiry for scholars of Indigenous peoples.²⁴ Women from the plundered White Earth reservation, for example, began migrating to Minneapolis in the 1920s. As their numbers increased during the Second World War, they formed personal networks with other Indian people in the city and created clubs and Indian centers. They helped other young women migrants to the city find jobs such as domestic service and hotel cleaning. Eventually these urban Indian women became active in the Red Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s and particularly engaged in child welfare work.²⁵ Overall, Child presents Ojibwe women as powerful community builders as opposed to the all-too-common view of the wretched squaw.

Ann McGrath's book, *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia* (University of Nebraska Press, 2015) similarly focuses on Indigenous women and men not just as subjects who were acted upon but as historical actors in their own right. McGrath's comparative focus represents a new trend in bringing out connections between Indigenous women's experience in disparate contexts. She takes the scholarship on interracial relationships in a promising new direction by examining the new space that interracial unions created, a "marital middle ground [that] presented a fundamental challenge

to the social, sexual, and colonizing dynamics of settler colonialism.”²⁶ This is the place, so often marginalized by other histories, where McGrath and other scholars have been able to find many of the lost voices of Indigenous women and to uncover the gender politics at work in colonial encounters.

McGrath’s book shifts away from the fur trade era to early national periods: the early nineteenth century when the Cherokee Nation battled against removal and the turn of the twentieth century in Queensland, Australia when the state confined Aboriginal people on missions and reserves.²⁷ McGrath asks different questions about intermarriage than earlier fur-trade scholars. She inquires into how it contributed to nation building in both the United States and Australia, among both settlers and Indigenous peoples, rather than examining how it changed Indigenous women’s status. Much scholarship on interracial marriage has focused primarily on attitudes toward it and laws against it among Europeans and their descendants in settler colonial nations.²⁸ McGrath eschews this one-sided focus and considers how Indigenous peoples also used intermarriage as part of their assertions of sovereignty. She shows, for example, how the Cherokees sought to regulate white men’s marriages to Cherokee women and gives a detailed portrait of Indigenous marriage law among North Queensland’s Aboriginal people.²⁹

McGrath’s intimate readings of several interracial marriages between Cherokees and European Americans and between Aboriginal people in Queensland and British settlers provide an important corrective to accounts of settler colonialism in both places that emphasize only violent conquest or to histories of interracial marriage that portray it primarily in functional economic terms. Her intention “to carve some space in the history books for feelings, for tenderness and tender emotions,” offers a fresh new perspective and compelling reading.³⁰ Her recounting of the marriage of Connecticut Yankee Harriet Gold to Cherokee intellectual Elias Boudinot, for example, shows how the negotiation of their interracial union resulted in the modernity of a new generation and the forging of new nations.³¹ She argues that close attention to interracial marriage helps us to avoid seeing colonialism as a one-way process and colonizers as all-powerful. Modernizing settler colonial nations may have used marriage as a means to shape the emerging social structure and racial hierarchy, but interracial relationships exposed chinks in the foundation

of the social order. McGrath characterizes these interracial unions not so much as spaces where colonial relationships played out, but as dynamic places where partners shared contending notions of law, history and culture.

McGrath joins with a number of other historians in seeing the importance of interracial marriage to settler colonial nation-building: Anne Hyde for the American West, Sarah Carter for Canada, Angela Wanhalla for New Zealand and Canada, and Katherine Ellinghaus for the US and Australia.³² These books do not study Indigenous women in isolation, but they provide much insight into their lives in changing colonial contexts. Andrae M. Marak and Laura Tuennerman's *At the Border of Empires: The Tohono O'odham, Gender, and Assimilation, 1880–1934* (University of Arizona Press, 2013) is the latest of several studies that demonstrate how important gender was to assimilation efforts toward Native peoples – a joint project of government officials and church authorities – at the turn of the twentieth century.³³ This has been an area of substantial study in regard to Indigenous women since 1990.³⁴ Marak and Tuennerman embed their discussion of assimilation efforts toward the Tohono O'odham, a group that straddled the Arizona and Sonoran border, within the context of the Progressive Era. Like Progressive reformers, many government officials saw the Tohono O'odham not as inherently inferior but as “salvageable.”³⁵ Marak and Tuennerman recap the significance of the relationship between the government and missionaries and reiterate how the boarding-school policy targeted Native American girls and young women to be indoctrinated in “domestic science” and Victorian gender roles. On the reservation, government-appointed white “farmers” focused on reforming Indian men while white women matrons sought to Americanize Native women, in an effort to remake Indian gender roles in the mold of late-Victorian middle-class models.

Ultimately, Marak and Tuennerman show, assimilation efforts toward Indigenous girls and women served not to ensconce them within the home, but to usher them into the capitalist economy, a process also noted by other scholars of the boarding schools and assimilation policy.³⁶ Field matrons on the Tohono O'odham reservation ended up serving as outing matrons, too – an intermediary role between the state and families who hired young Indian women as domestic servants.³⁷ Farmers and matrons envisioned very different gender roles for Indian men and women, but, Marak and Tuennerman contend, “they

ended up supporting a shared goal . . . movement into the larger capitalist, cash economy.”³⁸

In concert with Ann McGrath the authors show how much importance missionaries and reformers – as well as the Tohono O’odham – attached to marriage. “Marriage became, for reformers and tribal members alike, an area of contestation, assimilation, and resistance,” Marak and Tuennerman assert.³⁹ They conclude that officials regarded marriage as a “near perfect institution for ushering tribal members into the larger society.”⁴⁰ Officials frowned on interracial marriages, at least those between whites and Indians, but many members of the Tohono O’odham nation in the US married members of the Yaqui nation in Mexico, as well as other Mexicans. The Tohono O’odham even created a new clan for children of Tohono O’odham women who married outside tribe.⁴¹

What sets this book apart from other scholarship on gender and assimilation is that the authors examine the experiences of the Tohono O’odham on both sides of the border. Both the US and Mexican governments viewed the Tohono O’odham as “proto-citizens” in need of “state tutelage.” Both governments shared a number of common goals toward Indian peoples: they envisioned teaching Natives proper gender roles as a key way to prepare them to be citizens; they engaged in efforts to eliminate Native communalism and corporate identity through alienating Tohono O’odham land; and they aimed to turn supposedly “backwards” people into modern yeoman farmers. The United States, however, implemented an aggressive assimilation policy while the Mexican government under Porfirio Diaz took a virtual hands-off approach to the Tohono O’odham (in contrast to neighboring Yaqui and Sera peoples, whom it sought to exterminate). The authors point out the irony: “by doing nearly nothing . . . the Mexican government achieved the final outcome that many in the United States . . . might have wanted – the assimilation of the majority of the Tohono O’odham into mainstream culture and the adoption of mainstream gender norms.”⁴²

Mary Jane McCallum’s *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940–1980* (University of Manitoba Press, 2014) takes up and develops several of the issues raised by Marak and Tuennerman as well as Child but within the context of Manitoba, Canada.⁴³ She shows that the Indian residential schools in Canada played a similar role to the boarding schools in the United States in preparing Indigenous women for

work, primarily as domestic servants. The preponderance of Indigenous women in domestic service has been largely overshadowed in Canadian and US historiography by studies of immigrant women in the occupation. McCallum points out, however, that 36–57 per cent of Indigenous women in Canada participated in domestic service.⁴⁴ Other studies, too, have found that domestic service was a common occupation for Indigenous women in the twentieth century. Domestic service involving Indigenous women differed from that of other groups of women because it included the state as a mediator (through out-ing matrons in the US, for example).⁴⁵ The Canadian government set up the Ottawa experiment – the placement of Indian girls in Ottawa households – during the Second World War. In this scheme, families paid their Indigenous women domestics less than non-Native domestics. Young Native women might have benefited from better diets and access to the social outlets of city life, McCallum demonstrates, but they were also subject to the vagaries of white women’s power over them.⁴⁶

McCallum’s book also covers other realms of Indigenous women’s labor. In the second chapter, “The Permanent Solution,” the book’s most innovative chapter, McCallum looks at Indian hairdressers and beauty culture. In 1957 the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs established the Indian Placement and Relocation Program, modelled on a similar US program. The Program included a hairdressing school, which became a popular occupation for Indian women. McCallum explains that it afforded Indigenous women a measure of independence and also served as “a means to create, practice, and popularize alternative representations” of Indian women.⁴⁷ Indians used beauty to refashion images of themselves. McCallum’s chapter on Indigenous women in the nursing profession also provides much insight into how Aboriginal women by the 1980s used their position to help decolonize Indian health care.⁴⁸

McCallum’s book joins with a number of other recent studies that bridge the fields of labor history and Indigenous women’s history, including Carol Williams’s edited collection, *Indigenous Women and Work*, Cathleen Cahill’s *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, Colleen O’Neill’s *Working the Navajo Way* and Colette Hyman’s *Dakota Women’s Work: Creativity, Culture, and Exile*.⁴⁹ Scholars working at the intersections of these two fields have had to be as resourceful as the women they study in finding sources. McCallum credits historians such as Kathy

M'Closkey and Sherry Farrell Racette who have recovered Indigenous women's participation in wage labor through their studies of the material culture that Indigenous women often produced.⁵⁰

McCallum also provides an incisive final chapter that meditates on the discipline of history as a workplace that has consistently marginalized Indigenous women. She contends that the "professionalization of history as a discipline has served to reduce, exclude, and obscure the work of Native scholars in this field," and "professional history itself works as an agent that discourages and marginalizes Indigenous historical labour." She points out that there were only five Indigenous people in tenure-track positions in history in Canada in 2014.⁵¹ The numbers are also low in the United States and Australia.⁵² Rarely do we historians train our analytical eyes on the gendered and racialized labor history of our own profession. McCallum invites us to engage in this endeavor.

To give serious attention to Native women as historical actors, especially in the twentieth century and in urban areas, historians have had to combat a powerful trope that considers Indians, and especially Indian women, as outside modern history. McCallum notes that this trope has created a binary between traditional and modern and is predicated on a belief that modernity for Indigenous peoples "signified cultural deterioration and entailed conformity to white society." Too often "native people [have been] depicted as culturally incapable of withstanding change over time," she asserts. McCallum argues, "Native women were not 'displaced' by modernity, but rather laboured in modern Native ways."⁵³

Like Child and McGrath, McCallum wants to move away from earlier debates within Indigenous women's history that focus on "a history of decline or persistence, coercion or autonomy, difference or accommodation." McCallum pursues her research using unconventional methods such as life and oral histories, and weaves her own family history into her work. She contends that marginalization and displacement could and did coexist with other experiences, and that earlier models "cannot adequately represent our past."⁵⁴

The worlds of Indigenous women that Child and McCallum have reconstructed are scarcely evident in Sarah Deer's sobering book on rape in contemporary Native American society, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015).⁵⁵ Many sources contend that one in

three Native American women today will be raped during her lifetime. Other sources consider this to be an underestimate. A 2010 CDC survey found 49 per cent of Native women reported a history of sexual violence. Deer writes of instances where up to four generations of women within one family experienced rape, and other communities in which women did not know one other woman around them who had not been raped. Sexual violence has become normalized to such an extent in Indian communities, Deer argues, that mothers discuss with their daughters what to do *when* they get raped rather than *if* they get raped.⁵⁶

A majority of alleged perpetrators are non-Native because of a series of arcane policies and laws dating back to the 1800s as well as the 1978 Supreme Court decision, *Oliphant v. Suqumaish Indian Tribe*, which stripped tribal governments of their power to punish non-Indians. Yet state governments often lack jurisdiction and the General Accounting Office reported in 2012 that US attorneys had declined to prosecute 67 per cent of reported sex crimes against Native women.⁵⁷ Deer, a legal scholar, contends that the legal system for native women is broken: “rapists walked free on a regular basis . . . because of legal loopholes.”⁵⁸

Deer’s important book attempts to articulate an Indigenous feminist theory of rape that moves beyond the theories of non-Indigenous feminists, “who focus on patriarchy as the cause of gendered violence.” She argues that such theories are often a “poor match” for tribal societies, who have experienced rape as an aspect of abusive colonial power.⁵⁹ Deer sees the widespread incidence of sexual assault against Native women (and many Native men, too) as “a fundamental result of colonialism, a history of violence reaching back centuries.” Indeed, the legal system itself is a colonial institution that “has failed Native women by supplanting women-centered societies with patriarchal, oppressive structures that condone and thrive on violence as a way to control and oppress members of marginalized communities.”⁶⁰

To some extent, the rape of Native women has functioned as a metonym for the colonialism that Indigenous people have faced. Indigenous people share a common experience of “intrusion on their lands and culture by an exterior, hostile outsider,” Deer writes. “Rape victims experience the same dynamic, but it is played out on their bodies and souls rather than on the land.”⁶¹ But Deer does more than analyze rape as metaphor for colonialism. She argues that sexual and colonial

exploitation are inextricably connected. The weakening of tribal sovereignty, cultural practices and spiritual traditions, as well as “alienation from one’s homeland,” brings about vulnerability to sexual exploitation and victimization, she contends.⁶² And rape, in turn, affects not only individual victims but also strikes at entire Native communities. Indigenous women have been those who “hold the world together,” as Child puts it, so rampant experiences of rape threaten the cohesiveness and continuity of entire cultures. “Sovereignty thus suffers when the women suffer,” Deer concludes.⁶³ Deer follows the path blazed by the historian Andrea Smith, who makes similar linkages between colonialism and sexual exploitation in *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*.⁶⁴ Sovereignty and self-determination are key terms for Deer. A true solution to the problem of rape in Native communities must involve restoration of both personal and political sovereignty, she argues. But she makes an even bolder claim – rape should be “the number one priority for tribal nations. All other challenges faced by tribal nations are linked to the history and trauma of rape.”⁶⁵

Deer presents a starkly different portrait of Indigenous women’s lives today and in the past than that featured in the other books reviewed here. Deer writes, for example, that relationships between European fur traders and Native women “sound remarkably similar to descriptions of modern-day sex-trafficking.”⁶⁶ She mentions, too, that Native women became commoditized through marriage and that white men often married Indian women to gain their land.⁶⁷ These assertions directly contradict the work of two generations of scholars on the fur trade, including Child, and challenge McGrath’s portrayal of interracial intimacies. Deer is aware that her interpretation challenges that of other scholars and admits:

I approach this topic with some degree of trepidation because this kind of exploration has not always benefited Native people. Native communities are too often portrayed as traumatized, broken, and dysfunctional – all stereotypes of inferiority that neglect to honor the resilience and survival of the people by focusing on the bad rather than the good.⁶⁸

To be sure, Deer does include a few stories of resilience among her larger narrative of trauma. She mentions Tillie Black Bear (Sicangu Lakota) and Lenora Hootch (Yup’ik) as community-building women who started shelter programs for women in the 1970s.⁶⁹ Yet Deer emphasizes Indian women’s exploitation and suggests that historians

may have minimized the sufferings and real constraints on Indigenous women's lives. Alternatively, has Deer over-emphasized women's victimization and the power of the state over Indigenous women? She may be using broad strokes to show a long pattern of sexual oppression alongside colonial conquest in order to validate much-needed changes in the legal system.

The other historians featured in this review also acknowledge the violence of colonialism that Deer foregrounds, although it does not overwhelm their subjects. Child mentions that there were "constant symptoms of fracture and despair in Ojibwe community life throughout the boarding school era" and that "reservation hardships and urban poverty" after the Second World War "placed a large burden on families," resulting in high rates of child removal by state social service agencies.⁷⁰ Marak and Tuennerman note that it was difficult to prosecute and punish non-Indians for crimes committed on the Tohono O'odham reservation at the turn of the century. A non-Indian man found guilty of seducing a thirteen-year-old Indian girl was sentenced to just six months in jail and ordered to pay \$5 a month toward support of her child.⁷¹ McGrath, too, while discussing how the Cherokees and Aboriginal people in Queensland sought to negotiate and reconfigure colonialism on their own terms also recognizes how the settler colonial state in each case limited their options.

Although scholars have made great strides in creating a place for Indigenous women in our historical narratives, these differing interpretations not only demonstrate the multifaceted and complex lives of Indigenous women, but also how much more work needs to be done. The tension that differing interpretations produces suggests that a greater balance may be needed between acknowledging the trauma that many Indigenous women have suffered and recognizing the creative means by which they have also held their worlds together. McCallum is most effective in creating this balance. She weighs the power of the state against Indigenous women's efforts to shape their own lives, as recounted, for example in the experiences of Doris and Kitty, two young Indian women who worked as domestic servants in Ottawa in the 1940s. Their letters demonstrate their discontent with their domestic positions as well as their eagerness to break free of governmental interference in their lives. The files the government compiled about them reveal the extent to which the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs sought to discipline and control them.⁷²

It turns out that the path toward Indigenous women's history that Ella Deloria first set out on is not a straightforward one. Historians have uncovered hidden sources and shaped new methodologies to bring Indigenous women into the center of historical inquiry, but have also struggled to present a holistic picture of their lives. At the same time our larger historical narratives have not made space for Indigenous women's myriad experiences. Questions that animate the field of Indigenous women's history – alternative gender systems, gendered divisions of labor, marriage, modernity, urbanization, activism and the role of the state – are key issues within women's history generally. Greater attention to Indigenous women is needed and will surely enrich our historical narratives and contribute to a more complete history. Until then Deloria's mission remains an alluring aspiration.

Notes

1. Ella Cara Deloria, *Waterlily* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).
2. For example, Beth Piatote's new book combines literary and photographic analysis with Native women's history. See Beth Piatote, *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
3. Cornelia Dayton and Lisa Levenstein, "The Big Tent of US Women's and Gender History: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 99 (2012), pp. 793–817. See also Rebecca Edwards, "Women's and Gender History," in Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (eds) *American History Now* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), pp. 336–358. This essay covers Native American women minimally in its section on "Gender, Race, and Empire," but does not include them in other sections on "Women's Economic Roles," "Sexuality, Public Space, and Consumer Culture," and "Citizenship, Politics, and the State." If US women's histories neglect Indigenous women, Indigenous histories often fail to include them. Ned Blackhawk's recent overview of Indian history in the *Western Historical Quarterly* made no mention of scholarship on women and gender. Ned Blackhawk, "Currents in North American Indian Historiography," *Western Historical Quarterly* 42 (2011), pp. 319–324. Neither does Blackhawk mention Native American women's and gender history in Ned Blackhawk, "American Indians and the Study of US History," in Foner and McGirr (eds) *American History Now*, pp. 376–399.
4. Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2004); Ann McGrath, Marian Quartly, Marilyn Lake and Patricia Grimshaw (eds), *Creating a Nation: 1788–2007* (API Network, Curtin University of Technology: Network Books

- Australian Scholarly Classics, 2006) that thoroughly integrates Indigenous and women's history.
5. Ann McGrath, *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), p. 23.
 6. Scholar Dian Million introduced a new paradigm for Native women's studies called the "felt theory," which emphasizes the need to study the lives of Indian women within their own cultural contexts and environments. See: Dian Million, "Felt Theory: an Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History," *Wicazo Sa* 24 (2009), pp. 53–76, here p. 54. Laguna Pueblo author Paula Gunn Allen has also mentioned the importance of writing about Indian women from within the matrices of their lives. See Paula Gunn Allen, *Pocahontas: Medicine Woman, Spy, Entrepreneur, Diplomat* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 2.
 7. Brenda J. Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012).
 8. Child, *Holding Our World Together*, pp. 63–4.
 9. Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).
 10. Child, *Holding Our World Together*, pp. 22–29; quotes 25.
 11. See: Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (eds), *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983); Laura Klein and Lillian Ackerman (eds), *Women and Power in Native North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Lillian Ackerman, *A Necessary Balance: Gender and Power among Indians of the Columbia Plateau* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003). Many of these studies were by anthropologists.
 12. Child, *Holding Our World Together*, p. 22; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, p. 23.
 13. Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Canada: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1980); Jennifer H. S. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Carolyn Prodruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).
 14. Lynette Russell, "'Dirty Domestic and Worse Cooks': Aboriginal Women's Agency and Domestic Frontiers, South Australia, 1800–1850," *Frontiers* 28 (2007), pp. 18–46.
 15. Child, *Holding Our World Together*, p. 38.
 16. Child, *Holding Our World Together*, pp. 48–9. For works that regard Christian conversion as detrimental to Native American women, see: Carol Devens, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Karen Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot: The Subjugation of Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Ramón Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Stanford:

- Stanford University Press, 1991); Albert Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999).
17. Van Kirk, Sleeper-Smith, and others tended to emphasize Indigenous women's ongoing power, at least until the mid-nineteenth century when changing demographics (that is, increased numbers of European-descent women moving into fur trade areas for permanent settlement) led to the stigmatization and marginalization of interracial families. Other scholars, however, including Carol Devens in *Countering Colonization* and Anderson in *Chain Her By One Foot*, have argued that the new economic relations brought on by the fur trade undermined Indian women's status and autonomy.
 18. Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, pp. 6, 10.
 19. Child, *Holding Our World Together*, p. 15.
 20. Devon Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851–1909* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1993); K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Cathleen Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).
 21. Child, *Holding Our World Together*, pp. 95, 96.
 22. Child, *Holding Our World Together*, see esp. pp. 97–120.
 23. Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).
 24. Renya Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather Howard (eds), *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).
 25. Child, *Holding Our World Together*, pp. 139–60. See also Margaret Jacobs, *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Post-war World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).
 26. McGrath, *Illicit Love*, p. 2. Margaret Jacobs endorsed the book on the back cover and is thanked in the acknowledgements. Normally this would mean that it would be inappropriate for Jacobs to review the book, too. However, the field of Indigenous women's history is small, and we did not want to disqualify McGrath's book from consideration.
 27. McGrath, *Illicit Love*, p. xxii. Richard White coined the term “middle ground” in Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), in order to describe a place and time in which Indians and Europeans confronted one another on virtually equal terms and engaged in exchanges that produced a common world that was neither Indian nor European.

28. Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Katherine Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887–1937* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).
29. McGrath, *Illicit Love*, pp.147–92, 293–322.
30. McGrath, *Illicit Love*, p. 1.
31. McGrath, *Illicit Love*, pp. 35–85.
32. Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800–1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Carter, *Importance of Being Monogamous*; Angela Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart: A History of Interracial Marriage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2013); Angela Wanhalla, “Women ‘living across the line’: Intermarriage on the Canadian Prairies and in Southern New Zealand, 1870–1900,” *Ethnohistory* 55 (2008), pp. 29–49; Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart*.
33. Andrae M. Marak and Laura Tuennerman, *At the Border of Empires: The Tohono O’odham, Gender, and Assimilation 1880–1934* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013).
34. See Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Katherine Osburn, *Southern Ute Women: Autonomy and Assimilation on the Reservation, 1885–1934* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Margaret Jacobs, *Engendered Encounters: Feminism and Pueblo Cultures, 1879–1934* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999) and Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race*; Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*; Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*; Child, *Boarding School Seasons*; Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*.
35. Marak and Tuennerman, *At the Border of Empires*, p. 38.
36. See, for example, Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, p. 83.
37. Victoria Haskins, *Matrons and Maids: Regulating Indian Domestic Service in Tucson, 1914–1934* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012); Margaret Jacobs, “Working on the Domestic Frontier: American Indian Servants in White Women’s Households in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1920–1940,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 28 (2007), pp. 165–99.
38. Marak and Tuennerman, *At the Border of Empires*, p. 126.
39. Marak and Tuennerman, *At the Border of Empires*, p. 49.
40. Marak and Tuennerman, *At the Border of Empires*, p. 53.
41. Marak and Tuennerman, *At the Border of Empires*, p. 69.
42. Marak and Tuennerman, *At the Border of Empires*, p. 142.
43. Mary Jane McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940–1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014).
44. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, p. 26.
45. See Haskins, *Matrons and Maids*; Victoria Haskins, *One Bright Spot* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), a brilliant book that uses Haskins’ own family

- history to examine Australian Aboriginal women's experience in domestic service; Jacobs, "Working on the Domestic Frontier," and Margaret Jacobs, "Diverted Mothering among American Indian Domestic Servants, 1920–1940," in Carol Williams, (ed) *Indigenous Women's Work: From Labor to Activism*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012).
46. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, pp. 41–62.
 47. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, p. 109.
 48. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, pp. 167–224.
 49. Williams (ed) *Indigenous Women's Work*; Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*; Colleen O'Neill, *Working the Navajo Way: Labor and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005); Colette Hyman, *Dakota Women's Work: Creativity, Culture, and Exile* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012).
 50. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, p. 6.
 51. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, see esp. pp. 229, 230, 232.
 52. The American Historical Association estimates that Native Americans make up 0.6 per cent of all historians in the US, although they comprise about 1 per cent of the population. See Robert B. Townsend, "Who are the New History PhDs? NSF Snapshot from 2010 Provides Insights Into Current Trends," *Perspectives on History* (2012), available at <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2012/who-are-the-new-history-phds>. Figures for History PhDs are not available for Australia, but overall there are just 400 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians with PhDs. See Andrew Bock, "Rise of Aboriginal PhDs Heralds a Change in Culture," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 March 2014), <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/rise-of-aboriginal-phds-heralds-a-change-in-culture-20140316-34vqm.html>
 53. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, pp. 9–10, 20. See also O'Neill, *Working the Navajo Way*, p. 7.
 54. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, p. 10.
 55. Sarah Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
 56. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, pp. 4–5.
 57. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, p. 43.
 58. Title IX of the 2013 Violence Against Women Act addressed some of the jurisdictional problems related to the prosecution of rape of Native women. It restored jurisdiction over non-Indians who commit acts of domestic violence on tribal lands; but it is limited to perpetrators who have intimate relationships with victims. Therefore most acquaintance rape, all child sexual abuse, and all stranger rape committed by non-Indians is excluded from the bill. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, pp. xii, 101–02, 105.
 59. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, p. 24.
 60. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, pp. x, xiv.
 61. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, p. xiv.

62. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, p. xv.
63. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, p. 13.
64. Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Boston: South End Press, 2005).
65. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, p. xv.
66. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, p. 50.
67. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, pp. 65–6.
68. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, p. 10.
69. Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*, pp. xiii–iv.
70. Child, *Holding Our World Together*, pp. 128, 150–1.
71. Marak and Tuennerman, *On the Borders of Empire*, p. 66.
72. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, pp. 57–9.